

PRINCIPLES
OF
WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

FLORENCE A. SOMERS

ATHLETICS FOR WOMEN

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Principles of Women's Athletics

BY

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FOREWORD

Probably no study in recent years has come at a more opportune time than this one on the principles involved in the selection and conduct of athletics for girls and women. In a masterly and well-ordered fashion the author has outlined the situation, and crystallized the whole problem. If she had done nothing more than point out the difficulties, she would have made a distinct contribution. Until the questions she raises have been answered and until research has established beyond a reasonable doubt certain facts related to the growth and development of girls, until experiment and study has given us conclusive proof as to the effect of intensive and extensive participation in sports and games on girls and women—on certain physiological functions, on child bearing, etc., we will do well to give serious study to the principles which the author discusses

and sets forth, to the questions which she raises.

Miss Somers has made a valuable contribution to our literature and very clearly outlines some important problems and subjects for research in a way which ought to inspire immediate action. This study comes at a time when intelligent leaders in Education as well as in Physical Education are vitally concerned over the situation existing in girls' athletics in various parts of the country as well as at a time when we are fully cognizant of the fact that constructive procedure is absolutely dependent upon research.

Participation in sports and games is increasing by leaps and bounds and we know that we are handling a two-edged knife which can and does cut both ways. We must know more about this tool before we use it unsparingly. Physical Education is indebted to Miss Somers for a most scholarly statement of the whole subject.

AGNES R. WAYMAN,

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PREFACE

This is a study of the basic principles which underlie the practice of the athletic activities of girls and women, as these activities are conducted in our educational, industrial, and recreational organizations. The principles will be stated and described, in so far as possible, in accordance with the fundamental sciences which are the bases of education—biology, physiology, sociology and psychology.

It is with considerable hesitation that the author offers a study on this subject, upon which at the present time there are so many diverse opinions. Yet there seemed to be several urgent reasons for undertaking this particular piece of work. Here was an opportunity, perhaps, to attempt to discover by means of extensive reading and analysis, whether there are scientific truths upon which to base the assumptions which are constantly made

concerning the conduct and standards of girls' athletic activities. Even though the critical reader may not believe that a satisfactory scientific basis has been found herein for the conclusions drawn, the writer feels that a piece of work which may be considered as a beginning of the actual solution of the problem at a later time, will be of some slight value. The collection of such data as exist at the present time, and such opinions as have been expressed, may serve for an initial survey of the field, and a stimulus to further research and study. Such a survey is indeed necessary in order to clear the field and prepare the way for progressive work on the definite, related problems. If a criticism of these methods or conclusions were to lead to further investigations which would bring us nearer to the real truth, the study would have served its purpose.

No claim is made for the originality of these "principles," nor for their permanence. It is hoped that the reader will not forget that this is intended to be a preliminary presentation of the subject. Many of the suppositions may be modified or radically changed, and no

doubt will be, in terms of scientific studies which will be carried on in the future.

Although much has recently been written concerning the policies, standards, and organization of the athletic activities of girls and women, and these opinions are of value because of the wide experience of the individuals and committees which have prepared the material, no general statement of principles now exists. The principles herein formulated are intended to be an organization and effective statement of those expressed opinions and assumptions which have merit, and have either a semblance of proof or offer a possibility of future investigation. Park and Burgess,¹ in referring to a statement of natural history, make the significant comment, "It is its representative character, the character which makes it possible of verification by further observation, which makes it a scientific fact."

The widespread interest in the participation of girls and women in athletics, not only on

¹ Park and Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology* (1924). Reprinted by permission of the University of Chicago Press.



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